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Is the literature we are thus proposing to use morally wholesome in its influence? If we might understand the term "moral writer" in the same way as Cardinal Newman when he spoke of Shakespeare and Homer as "religious poets"—the former exhibiting "the characteristics of an unlearned and undisciplined piety," the latter "the religion of nature and conscience"—it would be easy to show that French literature, as a whole, is morally sound, if not morally earnest. But there are some who insist on much narrower definitions of "moral." In some quarters there is an ill-defined fear that young people in learning French run some risk of moral contagion, of receiving lessons in irreverence, flippancy, or indelicacy in the relations of the sexes. For high-school education the question may hardly be said to be a practical one, for, so far as I know, no texts have ever been used in French instruction anywhere which might stimulate irreverence or indelicacy. Nor is it likely that any such texts will ever be used, inasmuch as such literature is in truth not representative of the French nation.

But the whole subject of the moral influence of French literature has another, and perhaps a more important, aspect. We know that the French conceptions of moral good are easily confused with what is sensible or reasonable, or—as in the case of Goethe and Ruskin—with what is beautiful. Aside from these interpretations, Frenchmen are apt to understand goodness as sympathetic fellow-feeling. Now, is it not true, as M. Fouillée has recently asserted,<sup>1</sup> that at the present time morals are taking on more and more the sociological aspect, so that virtues formerly preached for their own sake—that is, for the benefit to the individual—are now advocated for their social and humanitarian importance? If so, it may well be a question whether in interpreting morals as reasonable and fraternal conduct, France is not, as so often in the past, pointing out the way of social progress.

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#### CONFERENCE OF THE ROMANCE DEPARTMENT

As introductory to his paper on "The Value of French in the High School," Associate Professor Jenkins expressed his belief that the indications are that teachers of French are to be called upon in

<sup>1</sup> *La France au point de vue morale* (Paris, 1900).

the future to assume greater responsibilities in the work of education. There is every reason, therefore, to urge instructors in French to meet and organize for collective study and discussion of the important problems which the educational world wishes to have solved. As an aid to this end, the Romance conference proposes the following program of topics, covering four years:

1904, "The Value of French in the High School," Associate Professor Jenkins.

1905, "The Position of French in the Curriculum: Its Relations to the English and the Latin Courses."

1906, "A Proposed Ideal Curriculum of Three Years."

1907, "The Equipment of Teachers of French: What is Essential?"

In the second paper, Miss Helena Dey, of the university High School, gave some interesting criticisms of recent French textbooks. A general discussion followed. In response to a motion, a committee was appointed by the chairman to frame resolutions embodying the results of the discussion. The committee has reported the following:

1. That the conference deplores the frequent waste of time in teaching beginners in French the common grammatical categories and terms of syntax, and urges that this knowledge ought to be a prerequisite to the study of the first foreign language.

2. That, in the event of the adoption in any school of modifications of the traditional grammatical terms, regard should be had also for the needs of the pupils beginning modern languages.

3. That the present confusion in the use of the French and English names of tenses ought to be remedied.